

**Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Providers
(CANASP)
Testimony to the Aging Committee
Regarding SB 244 An Act Increasing Home Care Provider Rates
and
HB 5395 An Act Concerning Aging in Place
March 4th, 2014**

Good morning Senator Ayala, Representative Serra, and members of the Aging Committee, my name is Lisa Labonte and I am here tonight to speak on behalf of the Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Service Providers, the 9 regional providers of Elderly Nutrition Programs (ENPs) throughout the state of Connecticut.

I would like to comment briefly on two bills today. First and foremost, I would like to state my strong support for SB 244 An Act Increasing Home Care Provider Rates. I would like to say thank you to the committee for raising this bill, which was raised at the request of a coalition of providers to the CT Home Care Program for the Elders, to which CANASP has been a participant. The bill requires that the rates of reimbursement for services under the CT Home Care Program for the Elders be immediately increased by 2%, and also establishes a mechanism for there to be an annual increase based on the cost of services. As Meals on Wheels is a service under the CT Home Care Program for the Elders, this would benefit the ENPs greatly.

In the last several years, CT has made a strong push to have the elderly and people with disabilities cared for in the comfort of their own home rather than in an institution. While the state has invested some financial resources towards this effort, they unfortunately have not invested in the home and community based providers who are essential to providing the care that allows individuals to remain at home and to age in place. Elderly nutrition, often known as the Meals on Wheels program, is a key element in the home and community based network of care. Providing one or two meals a day to an elderly person in their home helps ensure that they are not only eating, but eating food that meets the nutritional standards necessary to keep them healthy and active. Home delivered meals also provide a daily social contact for the elderly person, something that is essential to older adults living alone in the community. This simple and very inexpensive service can help prevent or delay the need for more costly services such as hospitalizations and nursing home care.

Unfortunately, reimbursement rates for services offered under the CT Home Care Program for the Elders, including Meals on Wheels, have not been increased since 2007. The price of gas and food continues to rise, as does the cost of everyday items such as paper, making it extremely difficult for meal providers to operate. As it stands now, elderly nutrition providers are losing on average \$1.23 for each two pack of meals they deliver. One major provider has already discontinued providing meals and others are questioning their ability to continue.

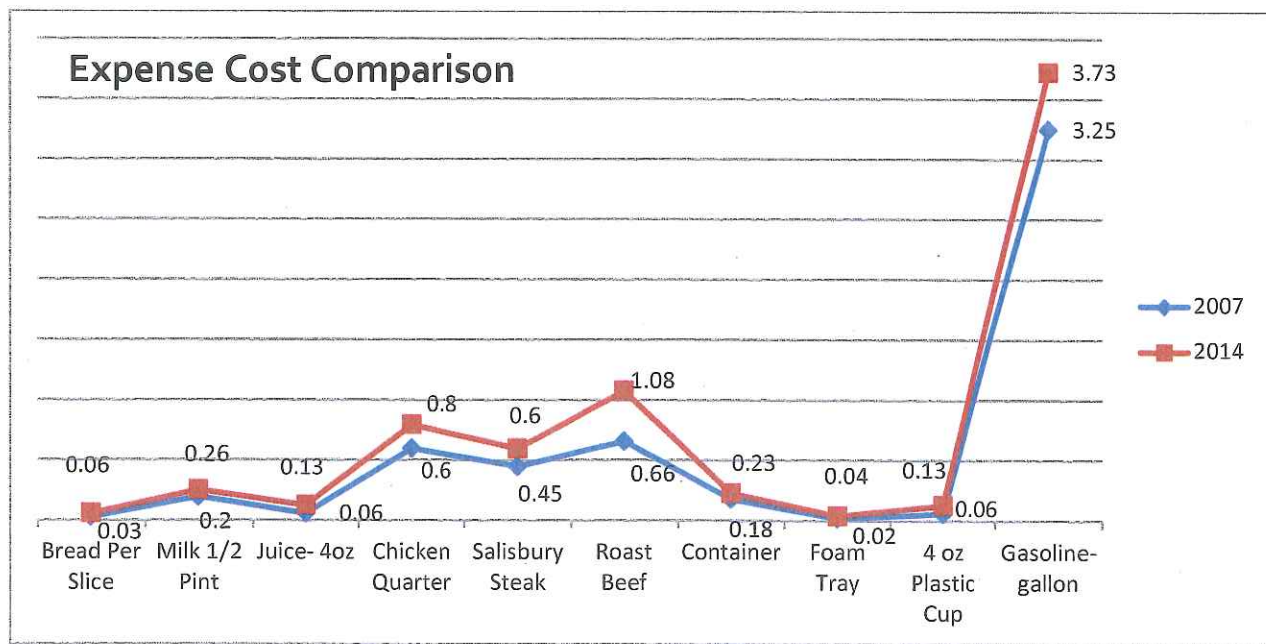
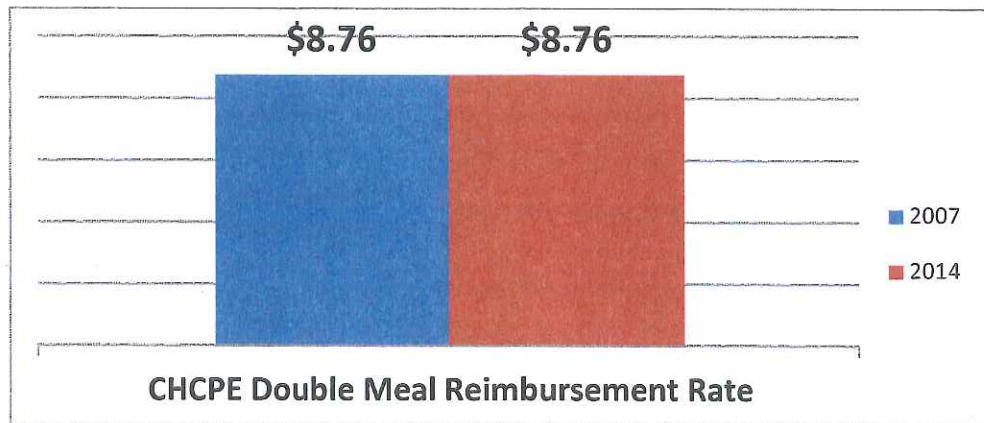
We greatly appreciate that the committee has raised SB 244 and we hope that the members of this committee can continue to support this legislation throughout the legislative process.

I would also like to comment on HB 5395 An Act Concerning Aging in Place. This bill implements a number of recommendations which came out of the Aging in Place Task Force and we support the general provisions in the legislation, which proposes additional resources to home and community based providers who are vital to maintaining the network of care which allows individuals to remain at home as they age. Section 3 of the bill establishes a matching grant program for municipalities and nonprofits who are engaged in initiatives designed to keep people at home as they age. We hope that home delivered meals are considered in the "community and social services" that could qualify for a grant under this section.

Lastly, section 5 of the bill establishes quarterly meetings with the involvement of the Commissioner's of the Department on Aging and the Department of Social Services, along with the elderly nutrition providers, area agencies on aging, access agencies, and other nutrition stakeholders. CANASP welcomes the opportunity for open communication as the elderly nutrition program can be a complicated one and we, more than anyone, want to make sure we fulfill the ultimate goal of providing the highest quality meals to each and every senior in our state. We look forward to being a partner in these discussions.

Thank you.

CT Association of Nutrition & Aging Service Providers



The items listed are a sampling of items, including food cost, packaging products and gasoline, used by Meals on Wheels Programs across Connecticut. Quantities and quality of food items are determined by federal and state nutritional guidelines with little flexibility allowed by the Elderly Nutrition provider.

In 2012, the Department of Social Services added a labeling regulation that required all meals to be labeled with meal contents, heating and refrigeration instructions, a prepared on date and use by date which added an additional .04 cost to each meal.